

The Protestant Lords Oppose Knox.

begins to assume that important place in Scottish life which it has held for so many generations. At this period, and on many subsequent occasions, its importance eclipsed that of Parliament itself. It was the assemblage of the highest and the most influential in the land, as well as of representatives of the lower classes. The influence of the queen, even within this ecclesiastical parliament, was seen in the growing tension between "the lords," and the clerical and lay supporters of Knox. The latter pressed for the ratification of the "Book of Discipline" (December 1561). The lords demurred, and even went the length of asserting that the right of assembly was limited by the royal sanction. Take from us the freedom of assemblies, retorted Knox, and you take from us the gospel. Maitland persisted, however, in bridling his vehemence in deference to the exigencies of policy, and the vigorous language of a petition for the redress of grievances, presented by the Assembly to the queen, was so attenuated in his diplomatic hands that Mary herself was surprised at its "many fair wordis," while expressing her doubts as to where "the heartis" were. His efforts to obtain the royal sanction in Mary's first Parliament, which met in May 1563, were equally unsuccessful. None of the Acts of 1560 was confirmed, and, as Mary had steadily refused to ratify them, Knox saw in the conduct of the politicians rank treachery to the Protestant cause in order to humour the queen. The politicians contented themselves with passing an Act of oblivion in reference to the events of the preceding three years, with a view, according to Knox, to cover their aggressions against Church property. "Sche," reflects he bitterly, "obtained of the Protestantis whatsoever sche desyred; for this was the reasone of many—we see what the queene has done; the lyck of this was never heard of within the realme; we will bear with the queene; we doubt not but all shal be weill." The reason of this forbearance, he adds, was utterly selfish. "Becaus many had their privat commoditie to be handilled at that parliament, the common cause was the less regarded." It would be rash to take the judgments of the reformer as final judgments in conjunctures so trying to an impatient and domineering temper. At this juncture he was estranged from Lord James, now Earl of Moray, and Maitland, almost beyond hope of reconciliation.